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SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR G/TIP, EAP/MTS, EAP/RSP, INL, DRL, IWI
LABOR FOR ILAB
JUSTICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION AND CRIMINAL DIVISION
DHS FOR ICE, CBP

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SUBJECT: PHILIPPINES: INPUT FOR THE 2008 TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT

REF: A. STATE 2731 (PREPARING THE TIP REPORT)
[1B.](#) MANILA 333 (ANTI-TIP EFFORTS IN MINDANAO)
[1C.](#) 07 MANILA 3320 (LAUNCH OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING CAMPAIGN)
[1D.](#) 07 MANILA 3241 (ENERGIZING PHILIPPINE PROSECUTION EFFORTS)
[1E.](#) 07 MANILA 2450 (LATEST TIP CONVICTION)
[1F.](#) 07 MANILA 2405 (AMBASSADOR BREAKS GROUND ON TWO SHELTERS)
[1G.](#) 07 MANILA 1924 (FROM MANILA TO ABIDJAN AND BACK)
[1H.](#) 07 MANILA 1054 (PROSECUTING TIP OFFENDERS)
[1I.](#) 07 MANILA 1043 (NEW TRAFFICKING CONVICTION)
[1J.](#) 07 MANILA 788 (COMBATING TIP AT AIRPORT)

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[11.](#) (U) This cable includes the Mission's input for the 2008 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. The information and statistics cover the period from April 2007 to March 2008, unless otherwise noted. The Mission's TIP point of contact is Political Officer Barry Fullerton, FullertonTB@state.gov, tel. (632) 301-2350, fax (632) 301-2472. Rank of TIP action officer is FS-03. Estimated completion time for report: SFS officer: 2 hours; FS-01 officers: 2 hours; FS-02 officers: 8 hours; FS-03 officers: 60 hours; FSN: 60 hours.

[12.](#) (U) Sources of information involved in the preparation of this report include the following Philippine government agencies: the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA); the Department of Justice (DOJ); the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE); the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG); the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI); the Bureau of Immigration (BI); the Philippine National Police (PNP); the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA); and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW). The following NGOs also provided significant input: the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS); Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP); the Visayan Forum Foundation (VFF); The Asia Foundation (TAF); the International Justice Mission (IJM); and the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Asia Pacific (CATW-AP). Some information stemmed from media reports.

OVERVIEW OF THE COUNTRY'S ACTIVITIES

13. (SBU) The answers below are keyed to the format contained in ref A, para 27:

1A. TRAFFICKING OVERVIEW: The Philippines is primarily an origin, and to a lesser extent, a destination and transit country of men, women, and children trafficked internationally for sexual exploitation and forced labor. In a 2006 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report on global patterns of trafficking, the Philippines ranked "high" in the citation index as a country of origin of trafficked persons. Trafficking also occurs within the country's borders. Estimates of various non-government and international organizations vary significantly -- some putting the number of Philippine citizens trafficked internally, into Southeast Asia, and beyond, at thousands each year. Aside from working in the commercial sex industry, many trafficked persons work as domestic servants, as well as in unsafe and exploitative industries as forced labor.

Women face a far greater risk of becoming victims of trafficking than men, and girls are more at risk than boys. Trafficking in children is generally internal: children and young women from poor farming communities in the Visayas (the central Philippines) and Mindanao (the southern Philippines) are brought to major urban centers and employed as factory workers, domestic helpers, or prostitutes. Ethnic minorities, migrant workers, and other socially marginalized groups are more at risk than other groups due to the high prevalence of poverty among them.

The Philippine government has no central database of trafficking information. The government's Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking in Persons (IACAT) planned to create a central database for tracking cases of TIP; however, a lack of resources hampered the government's intention to have a consolidated TIP database. Various government agencies and non-government organizations document cases of TIP generated from case studies, the number of beneficiaries of

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programs extended to trafficking victims, and actual cases filed or incidents reported to law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement agencies reported 155 alleged trafficking cases to the Department of Justice in 2007; of these, prosecutors filed 56 cases in court. In 2007, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) provided services to 359 victims of trafficking or potential victims of trafficking, 258 victims of child labor, and 44 victims of pedophilia or child pornography. In 2007, the NGO Visayan Forum Foundation provided services to 1,512 victims of trafficking rescued at major seaports in the country.

1B. UNDERSTANDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE PHILIPPINES: Endemic poverty, a high unemployment and underemployment rate, a cultural propensity to seek higher living standards elsewhere, a weak rule of law environment, and a flourishing sex tourism industry all contributed to the continuation of trafficking in the Philippines. Persons were trafficked from poor, rural areas throughout the Philippines to major urban areas within the country, especially Metro Manila and Cebu, but also increasingly to cities in Mindanao. A significant percentage of the victims of internal trafficking were from the Visayas and Mindanao and were fleeing poverty or violence. In 2007, 58 percent of the trafficking victims rescued by the Visayan Forum were from Mindanao. Victims of internal trafficking work as domestic servants or small-factory workers, as well as in the drug trade and in the commercial sex industry. They were often subject to violence, threats, debt bondage, inhumane living conditions, non-payment of salaries, and withholding of documents.

Traffickers most often targeted the multitudes of workers seeking overseas and urban employment. More than one million Philippine workers engaged in temporary overseas work assignments to all parts of the world in 2007. An estimated 11 percent of Gross National Product came from workers' remittances. The most common recruits for trafficking were girls and young women aged 13 to 30 from rural areas, mainly from impoverished families. Girls from ethnic minorities as young as ten years old also ended up as commercial sex workers.

Traffickers usually sent female recruiters to their own neighborhoods or villages to recruit friends or relatives, providing the victims a false sense of security. Traffickers often masqueraded as private employment recruiters, while actually cooperating with organized crime rings. The most common method to approach victims was to promise respectable and lucrative jobs with good benefits such as free room and board, transportation, and cash advances. Parents and guardians were often supportive, believing that work abroad is the key to ascending the socio-economic ladder.

NGOs suggested that organized crime syndicates from Japan and China controlled most of the sex industry in Manila. Employment agencies were involved in much of the trafficking both within the country and to overseas destinations. They may also have had a role in trafficking of persons into the country. Some of these agencies may have also undertaken legitimate recruitment of personnel, making it particularly challenging to identify illegal recruitment, as the line between legitimate and illegitimate agencies was blurred. Other recruiters may have been relatives or neighbors, while some parents and guardians sold their children into bondage. In many cases, trafficking syndicates used women in their mid-40s or older to seek out victims, given many victims' perception that older women were less likely to harm them.

Traffickers used land and sea transportation to transfer victims from island provinces to major cities within the country. The system of ferries and barges connecting the islands from Mindanao to Luzon was the most common and cheapest mode of travel used by traffickers to transport victims. Traffickers also took advantage of the growing budget airline carriers to transport victims out of the country. Traffickers used fake travel documents, falsified permits, and altered birth certificates.

Foreign trafficking rings brought the victims to destinations throughout Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North America, and Africa.

In 2007, foreign service posts of the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs reported that the majority of victims of trafficking rescued were from Malaysia and Singapore, while the rest were from

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Thailand, China, Hong Kong, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Japan, United Arab Emirates, Ivory Coast, Cyprus, Turkey, and Canada. The Philippines was only occasionally a destination point for internationally trafficked individuals. Reports indicated trafficking of women into the Philippines from China and, more recently Thailand, for the purpose of sexual exploitation. International organized crime gangs also transited trafficked persons from mainland China through the Philippines to third country destinations.

The government made progress in combating trafficking in 2007, particularly in the areas of law enforcement coordination and victim protection and assistance. The government secured convictions in three cases in 2007 (two during the reporting period), and law enforcement agencies filed more than 150 cases of alleged trafficking with prosecutors. Of these cases, DOJ prosecutors filed 56 in court, while the rest remained in preliminary investigation or were dismissed due to lack of evidence or on technicalities. Since 2003, DOJ filed 198 cases of trafficking in court. Slow processing times, as well as corruption within law enforcement agencies, appeared to be the key obstacles to additional convictions in 2007. Local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continued to provide assistance to victims and placed pressure on government officials to bolster anti-TIP activities.

I.C. GOVERNMENT EFFORTS: Several cabinet-level agencies and sub-agencies actively worked to combat trafficking in the Philippines. The IACAT coordinated, monitored, and oversaw the implementation of the anti-trafficking law (Republic Act 9208 of 2003), and served as an umbrella organization to coordinate anti-TIP efforts. The Secretary of Justice and the Secretary of Social Welfare and Development co-chaired the IACAT. Other member agencies included Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Labor and Employment, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, National

Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, National Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Immigration, and Philippine National Police. Three non-government organizations representing women, children, and overseas workers were also part of the IACAT.

Other government agencies' efforts to combat human trafficking included:

-- The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) extended assistance to victims of trafficking abroad and oversaw the voluntary repatriation of victims. It acted as the central coordinating unit for all bilateral, regional, and multilateral efforts. The DFA's Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) provided pre-departure orientation and counseling services and offered liaison services to citizens immigrating overseas with the help of other government and private agencies. The CFO also coordinated with the Bureau of Immigration (BI) regarding the apprehension of violators. In coordination with Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the DFA, through its Philippine embassies, took the lead in protecting the rights of migrant workers abroad. Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs), the operating arm and overseas representative of DOLE, were under the supervision of the Philippine Chief of Mission or Ambassador;

-- The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) focused on the protection of victims and was the responsible agency for the social reintegration of victims of trafficking. DSWD operated 42 temporary shelters for victims throughout the country. In addition to DSWD's services within the Philippines, social workers were deployed to the Philippine diplomatic missions in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taipei, Tokyo, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait City, and Riyadh to provide psycho-social counseling to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in distress, and worked in conjunction with POLOs;

-- The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) was responsible for coordinating the government's campaign against illegal recruitment, and for maintaining records of overseas Filipino workers. It ensured the strict implementation of, and compliance with, the rules and guidelines on the employment of persons locally and overseas. It also monitored, documented, and reported cases of trafficking in persons involving employers and labor recruiters. DOLE officers worked as labor attaches at Philippine diplomatic missions and spent much of their time assisting overseas workers. Thirty-nine labor attaches served at thirty-four POLOs around the world at Philippine

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diplomatic missions;

-- The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), an attached agency of DOLE, had responsibility for protecting overseas workers and their dependents. It provided counseling and legal assistance programs to overseas workers and conducted information dissemination and awareness campaigns. In countries with large numbers of OFWs, an OWWA officer often served as Assistant Labor Attaché;

-- The Department of Justice was responsible for protecting the rights of victims of trafficking and prosecuting traffickers. It also offered free legal assistance for trafficked persons in coordination with the DSWD and NGOs. After the passage of the anti-trafficking law in May 2003, DOJ established the Task Force on Anti-Trafficking in Persons, composed of 17 prosecutors from the DOJ who focused specifically on trafficking. Additionally, approximately 72 prosecutors in regional DOJ offices handle cases of trafficking in persons. DOJ continued to lead the government's efforts, with the Secretary of Justice acting as Chair of the government's anti-TIP coordinating body, the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking in Persons;

-- The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), the Philippine National Police (PNP), and the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) worked to identify, investigate, and dismantle trafficking operations and prosecute offenders. The NBI created a task force focused solely on investigating trafficking allegations, a task force on the protection of women against exploitation and abuse and a task force on the protection of children from exploitation and abuse;

-- The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) conducted systematic information and prevention campaigns and, together with NAPOLCOM, was creating a databank for the efficient monitoring, documentation, and prosecution of cases of trafficking in persons;

-- The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) instituted development plans for women and provided technical assistance in setting up and strengthening response to gender issues. It formulated and monitored policies on trafficking in persons in coordination with relevant government agencies;

-- The Bureau of Immigration (BI) administered and enforced immigration and alien administration laws and adopted measures for the apprehension of suspected traffickers both at the place of arrival and departure. It ensured the compliance of Filipinos engaged or married to foreign nationals with the guidance and counseling requirements in the trafficking law. It also controlled and monitored border points by deploying deputized marines to help enforce immigration laws;

-- The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), affiliated with DOLE, was the primary administrator of licenses for recruitment agencies. An average of 3,000 citizens visited POEA's main office each day, seeking employment overseas. Recruitment agencies cannot solicit employees for overseas work without the permission of POEA. POEA had authority to place on probation or bar from recruiting new workers any agencies in violation of POEA standards. POEA also administered pre-employment orientation seminars and pre-departure counseling programs to applicants for overseas employment. POEA trained diplomatic staff, overseas labor officers, and social welfare officers in methods for assisting trafficking victims abroad. It also provided free legal assistance to trafficked victims. In December 2006, POEA issued new employment requirements for overseas Filipino household workers better to protect them from widespread employer abuse and trafficking in persons. The new requirements increased the monthly minimum wage from US\$200 to US\$400 and raised the minimum age from 18 to 23;

-- Philippine Center on Transnational Crime (PCTC) collected information for the effective monitoring, documentation, and prosecution of trafficking cases of foreign nationals.

1D. LIMITATIONS ON GOVERNMENT EFFORTS: The Philippines remains one of the poorest countries in Asia. The government's ability to address the trafficking problem remained limited by inadequate resources, including for police. Corruption in the government and the general

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ineffectiveness of the judicial system were also factors that impeded the government's ability to prosecute trafficking cases. The lack of resources and high judgeship vacancy rate in the judiciary significantly slowed trial times. A 2005 UN Development Program (UNDP) and Philippine Supreme Court study found that the average trial takes over three years. Many government agencies have not yet fully implemented the 2003 anti-trafficking law due to lack of training and orientation on the scope and magnitude of the problem.

National and international NGOs and other foreign donors (including the USG) complemented official government programs. Anti-trafficking resources focused primarily on prevention and protection for overseas Filipino workers. The strongest efforts existed in the areas of helping to prevent persons from becoming victims, repatriating victims in destination countries, and reintegrating them into Philippine society upon their return home.

1E. MONITORING ANTI-TRAFFICKING EFFORTS: The government had no central database of trafficking information. Several agencies maintained their own separate databases, but many of these did not focus exclusively on trafficking. The Philippine Center on Transnational Crime (PCTC) collected information on transnational crime activities, but its records were not comprehensive. The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), an attached agency of the DFA, developed a database to monitor legal problems involving Filipinos overseas, but its system was not restricted to trafficking and also generated reports on other cases such as domestic violence

and human smuggling. The CFO plans to integrate this information into a shared government database on migration. The DILG tasked the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) to maintain a database of trafficking cases based on the quarterly reports from PNP. In December 2006, the DILG directed the PNP to monitor trafficking cases and to provide information to the NAPOLCOM database. While law enforcement information was entered into the database in 2007, the system was not yet a reliable source of trafficking data.

Government officials involved in anti-TIP activities met regularly with concerned NGOs, foreign donors, embassies, and regional and international organizations to share information and assessments, but all agreed solid data about the extent of the problem remained difficult to obtain.

In November and December 2007, IACAT, in partnership with NGOs and with support from the donor community, held three sub-national conferences on anti-trafficking in persons in the three main areas of the Philippines -- Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The conferences brought together government organizations, NGOs, and civil society groups to assess ongoing government and non-government initiatives to combat trafficking; make recommendations for further advancements; and share relevant experiences, best practices, and success stories.

INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF TRAFFICKERS

¶4. (SBU) The answers below are keyed to the format contained in ref A, para 28.

¶A. LAWS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING: The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 (Republic Act 9208) is the Philippine landmark legislation to protect women and children from sexual exploitation and forced labor. The law affirmed the government's resolve to prevent and suppress the illegal trade in persons, especially women and children, and carried penalties not only against traffickers but also against users or buyers of victims. Under the law, the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of a minor for the purpose of exploitation was enough to file a case against a trafficker. It is not necessary to show that such acts were made through threats, use of force, or other coercive measures. The law penalizes both internal and transnational trafficking.

In addition to the anti-trafficking law, the government used several laws to prosecute traffickers, including: the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act (Republic Act 8042), which gave the government the authority to combat illegal recruiting; the

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MAIL-ORDER BRIDE LAW (REPUBLIC ACT 6955), WHICH MADE IT UNLAWFUL FOR FOREIGN MEN TO MARRY FILIPINO WOMEN FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXPLOITATION; THE INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTION ACT OF 1995 (REPUBLIC ACT 8043), WHICH SOUGHT TO PROTECT FILIPINO CHILDREN FROM ABUSE, EXPLOITATION, TRAFFICKING, AND/OR SALE; THE SPECIAL PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AGAINST CHILD ABUSE, EXPLOITATION, AND DISCRIMINATION ACT (REPUBLIC ACT 7610), WHICH ESTABLISHED PENALTIES FOR CHILD EXPLOITATION, INCLUDING CHILD TRAFFICKING; AND THE ANTI-CHILD LABOR LAW (REPUBLIC ACT 9231), WHICH PROHIBITED THE EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN BELOW THE AGE OF 15 EXCEPT WHEN GRANTED SPECIAL PERMISSION BY DOLE, AND GUARANTEED THE PROTECTION, HEALTH, AND SAFETY OF CHILD WORKERS.

¶B. PENALTIES UNDER THE TRAFFICKING LAW: THE ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS ACT OF 2003 IMPOSED HARSH PENALTIES ON PERSONS ENGAGED IN TRAFFICKING. THE LAW DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN THREE TYPES OF VIOLATIONS: DIRECT PARTICIPATION IN TRAFFICKING; ACTS THAT PROMOTED TRAFFICKING; AND MORE SERIOUS ACTS OF TRAFFICKING, CALLED "QUALIFIED" TRAFFICKING. THE PENALTY FOR A DIRECT ACT WAS A FINE OF P1 MILLION TO P2 MILLION (25,000 TO 50,000 USD) AND UP TO 20 YEARS IMPRISONMENT; PROMOTION OF TRAFFICKING THROUGH FALSIFICATION OF DOCUMENTS AND TAMPERING WITH CERTIFICATES CARRIED UP TO 15 YEARS IMPRISONMENT AND A FINE OF P500,000 TO P1 MILLION (12,500 TO 25,000 USD). THE MAXIMUM PENALTY APPLIED WHERE THE VICTIM WAS A CHILD, TRAFFICKING WAS CONDUCTED ON A LARGE SCALE, OR THE CRIME INVOLVED MILITARY OR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AND PUBLIC OFFICERS OR

EMPLOYEES, RESULTING IN LIFE IMPRISONMENT AND A FINE OF P2 MILLION TO P5 MILLION (50,000 TO 125,000 USD). THOSE WHO ENGAGED THE SERVICES OF TRAFFICKED PERSONS FOR PROSTITUTION FACED PENALTIES OF BETWEEN SIX MONTHS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE AND A FINE OF P50,000 (1,250 USD) TO A MAXIMUM OF ONE YEAR IMPRISONMENT AND A FINE OF P100,000 (2,500 USD).

THE ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS ACT OF 2003 LAW PRESCRIBES THE SAME PENALTIES FOR TRAFFICKING FOR PURPOSES OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, PROSTITUTION, PORNOGRAPHY, FORCED LABOR, SLAVERY, INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE, OR DEBT BONDAGE. DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD, TWO CASES OF TRAFFICKING FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ONE IN CEBU CITY AND ANOTHER IN DAVAO CITY, RESULTED IN THE CONVICTION OF THREE TRAFFICKERS. THE JUDGE IN EACH CASE FOUND THE DEFENDANTS GUILTY OF "QUALIFIED" TRAFFICKING, AND IMPOSED THE MAXIMUM PENALTY - LIFE IMPRISONMENT. IN THE JULY 20 RULING IN CEBU CITY, THE JUDGE ALSO ORDERED THE TWO DEFENDANTS TO PAY A FINE OF USD 75,000. IN THE JULY 27 RULING IN DAVAO CITY, THE JUDGE ORDERED THE TRAFFICKER TO PAY A FINE OF USD 50,000.

C. PUNISHMENT FOR LABOR TRAFFICKING OFFENSES: THE ANTI-TRAFFICKING LAW CLEARLY STATED THAT IT WAS ILLEGAL TO RECRUIT, TRANSPORT, TRANSFER, HARBOR, PROVIDE, OR RECEIVE A PERSON BY ANY MEANS, INCLUDING UNDER THE PRETEXT OF DOMESTIC OR OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, OR APPRENTICESHIP, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROSTITUTION, PORNOGRAPHY, SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, FORCED LABOR, SLAVERY, INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE, OR DEBT BONDAGE. ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTED OR FACILITATED TRAFFICKING COULD RESULT IN IMPRISONMENT OF UP TO 15 YEARS AND A FINE BETWEEN P500,000 TO P1 MILLION (12,500 TO 25,000 USD). THERE HAD BEEN NO CONVICTIONS FOR TRAFFICKING FOR FORCED LABOR.

THE MIGRANT WORKERS AND OVERSEAS FILIPINOS ACT OF 1995 (REPUBLIC ACT 8042) REGULATES THE RECRUITMENT AND DEPLOYMENT OF FILIPINOS FOR OVERSEAS WORK. THE LAW IMPOSES IMPRISONMENT OF SIX TO 12 YEARS AND A FINE OF P200,000 TO P500,000 (5,000 TO 12,500 USD) TO RECRUITERS AND PLACEMENT AGENCIES THAT ARE NOT REGISTERED WITH THE POEA, AND TO RECRUITERS, WHETHER REGISTERED OR NOT, WHO PLACE WORKERS IN JOBS HARMFUL TO HEALTH AND MORALITY, OR ALTER EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS TO THE PREJUDICE OF THE WORKER.

IN 2007, POEA FILED 469 ADMINISTRATIVE CASES AGAINST LICENSED LABOR RECRUITERS WHO USED FRAUDULENT AND DECEPTIVE OFFERS TO ENTICE JOBSEEKERS OR IMPOSED INAPPROPRIATELY HIGH OR ILLEGAL FEES ON PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES.

D. PENALTIES FOR RAPE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT: UNDER REPUBLIC ACT 8353, THE ANTI-RAPE LAW OF 1997, THE PENALTY FOR RAPE IS LIFE IMPRISONMENT. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT 7877, OR THE ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT ACT OF 1995, ANY PERSON WHO VIOLATED THE PROVISIONS OF THE ACT SHALL FACE IMPRISONMENT OF NOT LESS THAN ONE MONTH OR MORE THAN SIX MONTHS, OR A FINE OF UP TO P20,000 (500 USD), OR BOTH A FINE AND IMPRISONMENT.

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E. PROSTITUTION LAWS: Prostitution was illegal, but remained widespread. Many prostitutes worked independently in small brothels rather than in prominent entertainment clubs. Hostesses, referred to as "guest relations officers" (GROs), sometimes engaged in illegal prostitution, although their employers usually barred them from leaving an establishment with a customer. The government required GROs to undergo frequent health checks.

An anti-prostitution bill remained under consideration in the House of Representatives. It would punish those involved in the industry, such as pimps and brothel owners, while decriminalizing the action of those exploited in the prostitution industry. The draft bill stated that women and children who engaged in prostitution could be victims and should be free from criminal liability. It also stated that people exploited in prostitution were entitled to support and protection, and could seek legal redress.

F. PROSECUTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING OFFENDERS: Since the passage of the 2003 anti-trafficking law, the Department of Justice has obtained convictions in eight cases. In 2007, law enforcement agencies reported 155 trafficking cases to DOJ for review. Of these, DOJ

filed 56 in court. Seventy-seven cases remained in preliminary investigation at DOJ; three were filed under other related laws; and 19 were dismissed by the prosecution. Since 2003, DOJ has filed 198 cases under the anti-trafficking law in court. During the reporting period, Philippine courts convicted three individuals in two cases under the 2003 anti-trafficking law. All three traffickers received life sentences after the courts found them guilty of "qualified trafficking" of minors for prostitution. The convicted traffickers remained in jail serving their life sentences.

Despite the DOJ's intensified efforts to prosecute and convict traffickers, the majority of cases continued to drag because of an overburdened judicial system. Judicial process on average takes three years from the filing of charges to resolution of a case. There were convictions under related legislation, such as child abuse and illegal recruitment.

Under certain circumstances and with approval of the court, Philippine law permitted private attorneys to prosecute cases under the direction and control of a public prosecutor. These "private prosecutors" serve on behalf of the victims in court proceedings. The government used this provision effectively, allowing and supporting International Justice Mission (IJM) and other NGOs that provide legal assistance to investigate and prosecute trafficking cases. In addition to DOJ's ongoing TIP cases, IJM initiated 32 criminal cases of qualified trafficking against suspected traffickers since 2003. Of these 32 cases, one resulted in a conviction (the July 20 conviction in Cebu City); 14 remained on trial at the end of the reporting period; eight were in preliminary hearings; eight were under investigation; and one was archived because the accused remained at large.

The government actively investigated cases of trafficking-related offenses, but was hampered by scarce resources. The principal investigative agencies were BI, NBI, and PNP. At PNP, the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) and the Women and Children's Concerns Division handled most trafficking cases. In 2007, PNP investigated 104 cases of trafficking involving women and children. PNP recommended 103 cases to the DOJ for prosecution.

From April 2007 to January 2008 the NBI's Anti-Human Trafficking Division investigated 97 complaints of trafficking. At the end of the reporting period, one case was filed with DOJ for potential prosecution. The Philippine Center for Transnational Crime investigated nine cases of trafficking. The BI ensured that all foreign nationals within its territorial jurisdiction complied with existing laws to ensure the protection of women and children against commercial sexual exploitation. BI's interceptions at Philippine airports typically went to NBI for further investigation.

I.G. TRAINING FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS: Government agencies continued to increase the frequency of TIP training and orientation efforts. The programs included training for several thousand officials, including prosecutors, judges, NBI investigators, local government units, and city councilors. In 2007, the IACAT, with the support

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from USAID's Rule of Law Effectiveness Program, conducted the Filipino Initiative Against Trafficking, a series of activities including training of prosecutors, law enforcers and social workers, on effective coordination in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases. The USG, UNICEF, and other donors also supported training of police officers and prosecutors.

The PCTC conducted training on upgrading its personnel's skills in combating transnational crimes, including trafficking. POEA sponsored a seminar on evidence-gathering for the effective prosecution of illegal recruitment and participated in various forums on human trafficking.

I.H. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: The government cooperated with other countries in the investigation and prosecution of TIP cases, particularly in cases with Malaysia, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and Australia. Because there was no central database linking the various law enforcement agencies, numbers of cooperative investigations conducted were not available. The Philippines had

treaties on mutual legal assistance on criminal matters with Australia and the United States. The Philippines was also a signatory to the ASEAN Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty to share information and evidence among ASEAN member-states.

The Philippines participated in other international efforts to prevent, monitor, and control trafficking. Having completed Phase I of an agreement with the United Nations Center for International Crime Prevention-Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (CICP/ODCCP) to gather information on organized criminal groups involved in trafficking, the DSWD began implementation of the second phase of a project to provide capacity building to service providers in havens for women and children, rehabilitate trafficked victims by providing full security, financial assistance, and non-formal training, and establish linkages with the business community for possible internship programs.

II. EXTRADITIONS: Philippine law permits extradition, and the Philippines had extradition treaties with Australia, Canada, the Federated States of Micronesia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, the United States, and the Kingdom of Thailand. Under the terms of the 2003 anti-trafficking law, trafficking in persons is considered an extraditable offense. However, the government received no extradition requests for trafficking offenders, foreign or national, during the reporting period.

III. GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT AND/OR TOLERANCE: Government officials at all levels publicly stated their commitment to combating trafficking in the Philippines. While there was no evidence that the government, as an institution, tolerated, permitted or allowed trafficking crimes, widespread corruption at all levels of government permitted many organized crime groups, including traffickers, to conduct their illegal activities. Corruption among law enforcement agents remained pervasive. At the street level, it was not uncommon for officers to demand petty bribes for minor offenses, real or alleged. Law enforcement officers often extracted protection money in exchange for permitting businesses to conduct legitimate operations without necessary permits, or for illegitimate businesses, such as brothel owners or gambling and drug lords. It is widely believed that some government officials are involved in, or at least permit, trafficking operations within the country.

IV. EFFORTS TO INVESTIGATE AND PROSECUTE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FOR INVOLVEMENT IN TRAFFICKING: During the reporting period, the prosecution and defense attorney concluded the presentation of evidence in the trial of police officer Dennis Reci, charged in June 2005 for allegedly trafficking minors for sexual exploitation at his nightclub in Manila. Reci remained under detention while the case was pending court's decision. A decision is expected in 2008.

In February 2007, the Task Force Against Trafficking at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), an inter-agency task force composed of DOJ, BI, Customs, Airport Police and the Manila International Airport Authority, was formed to combat trafficking at the airport by intercepting undocumented passengers, assisting trafficking victims, and monitoring reported involvement of airport personnel. During the reporting period, the NAIA Task Force filed one case of trafficking in persons involving an immigration employee

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at the airport. Two other cases of trafficking-related corruption involving four immigration personnel were filed with the Office of the Ombudsman. Because of reports of alleged collusion of government officials and immigration employees with organized trafficking syndicates, the Bureau of Immigration instituted a number of preventive measures at the airports, including prohibition of immigration officers from carrying mobile phones on duty and regular rotation of officers at assigned counters.

In 2007, the Office of the Ombudsman created the Tanodbayan (Ombudsman) Against Government Employees Involved in Trafficking (TARGET), composed of special investigators and prosecutors tasked to investigate cases against government officials engaged in trafficking in persons or trafficking-related corruption. The Office of the Ombudsman also conducted a study to identify points within government procedures that were particularly vulnerable to

corruption and trafficking, and expressed commitment to investigate enforcement gaps.

I.L. INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING TROOPS: The Philippines deployed a total of 725 military and police personnel in nine United Nations peacekeeping missions. There were no reports of Philippine peacekeepers engaging in or facilitating trafficking. Before deploying troops to peacekeeping operations, the Department of National Defense and the PNP conducted seminars and training for peacekeepers, including a training module on trafficking in persons.

The DFA also provides pre-departure orientation seminars to foreign service officers and other government personnel, including military and police, before being assigned abroad.

I.M. CHILD SEX TOURISM: Child sex tourism continued to be a serious problem for the Philippines. Sex tourists reportedly came from Asia, Europe, and North America to engage in sexual activity with minors. The government cooperated with the USG in prosecuting American nationals under the terms of the U.S. PROTECT Act of 2003, which criminalized the commission by American nationals overseas of child abuse, including child pornography and other sexual offenses against a minor. At the end of the reporting period, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security had nine ongoing PROTECT Act investigations in collaboration with Philippine law enforcement. ICE received stellar cooperation from the government in three earlier PROTECT Act cases involving Edilberto Datan, Bernard Lawrence Russell, and John W. Seljan. In each case, the individuals traveled to the Philippines to engage in sexual activity with minors. All three received convictions; courts also ordered Edilberto Datan and Bernard Russell to pay restitution fees to their victims.

PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

I.5. (SBU) The answers below are keyed to the format contained in ref A, para 29.

I.A. ASSISTANCE TO FOREIGN TRAFFICKED VICTIMS: The Anti-Trafficking Law provides that foreign trafficked victims or trafficking victims who transit the Philippines are entitled to the same assistance and protections as Philippine citizens. The government provides temporary residency status, relief from deportation, shelter, and access to legal, medical, and psychological services to foreign victims of trafficking. During the reporting period, the Philippine Center for Transnational Crime, in cooperation with the Embassy of Thailand in the Philippines, assisted three victims of trafficking from Thailand.

I.B. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO TRAFFICKING VICTIMS: The government assisted victims by providing temporary residency status, relief from deportation, shelter, and access to legal, medical, and psychological services. Additional protective services included telephone hotlines for reporting abused/exploited cases of women and children. The DSWD's Residential Care unit provided 24-hour residential group care to children on a temporary basis to facilitate healing, recovery, and reintegration with their families and communities. DSWD maintained 42 residential care units; of these, 13 centers were for women, 13 for girls, and the remaining for men, boys, and the elderly. Substitute homes, or havens, served

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the needs of female victims of trafficking and other forms of abuse. Twelve substitute homes provided shelter for over 1,400 women and their children. The DSWD also referred cases to accredited NGOs for children and accredited NGOs for women, which provided temporary shelter and community services to women and children in crisis, including victims of trafficking. While DSWD's efforts to protect victims were impressive, government funding for DSWD's programs remained inadequate.

Crisis intervention and child protection units operated in many public hospitals throughout the country. The crisis units also provided telephone counseling, conducted rescue operations, and provided overnight facilities and referral services for longer-term

shelters. Women and Children Protection Units in Department of Health (DOH) hospitals offered medical services and psychological counseling to victims of violence. The Philippine General Hospital in Manila evaluated and treated TIP victims on behalf of the government.

IC. GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF NGO SERVICES FOR VICTIMS: The government cooperated well with NGOs to support and provide services to trafficking victims. The Philippine Ports Authority's Gender and Development (GAD) Focal Point Program, an agency under the DOTC, provided the building and amenities for a halfway house, which the VFF managed. Activities of the halfway house staff included regular inspection of the different port areas, assistance to possible victims of traffickers and victims of illegal recruitment, information dissemination, and basic orientation seminars.

VFF ran the Multi-Sectoral Network Against Trafficking in Persons (MSNAT) to promote cooperation and sustain partnership among government, NGOs, the private sector, and civil society. Government partners included the DOJ, DOLE, DFA, DILG, DSWD, National Police Commission, Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), and the Commission on Human Rights. DSWD provided limited funding to accredited NGOs to help meet the basic needs of victims, such as food, clothing, medicine, and legal services. With assistance from DFA, DSWD established arrangements with NGOs in other countries to provide distressed OFWs with temporary shelter, counseling, and medical assistance.

VFF, which the State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report highlighted in 2004 for its best practices, works closely with Philippine Ports Authority to operate halfway houses for victims and potential victims of TIP. VFF currently operates shelters in Batangas, Davao, Manila, Sorsogon, and Zamboanga. It plans to open additional halfway houses and safe houses in Iloilo and Surigao in 2008.

In July 2006, VFF signed a 10-year agreement with the Manila International Airport Authority to establish an airport halfway house for TIP victims. Under this partnership, VFF will also train airport immigration and customs officials on how to identify potential victims of human trafficking.

In general, NGOs cannot rely on government funding. They typically turned to foreign governments, foreign and domestic religious groups, third-country and multinational donor agencies, and private foundations. However, the government remained highly aware of the value of NGOs in combating trafficking, and routinely sought cooperation and input from NGOs.

ID. LAW ENFORCEMENT IDENTIFICATION OF TRAFFICKING VICTIMS: The implementing rules of the 2003 anti-trafficking law outlined procedures to identify and refer victims of trafficking, whether the incident occurred inside or outside of the country. After rescue operations, investigation, and filing of cases, victims of trafficking rescued within the country went under the custody of the DSWD for proper treatment. For cases overseas, consular officers and personnel from the POLO conducted visits to the jail, work site, or residence of the victim, and then provided temporary shelter, and legal, financial, and repatriation assistance to the victims. Upon arrival in the Philippines, the DSWD, the NBI, or PNP provided psycho-social interventions, psychological and medical examinations, and therapy sessions, if necessary.

Port personnel referred victims, as well as domestic workers

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detained at port police stations, to the halfway houses run by the VFF. The DSWD also referred cases of physical and verbal abuse against domestic workers to VFF for psycho-social intervention and short-term care until repatriation of the victims. The VFF maintained five halfway houses in strategic port areas in Batangas, Manila, Davao, Sorsogon, and Zamboanga City. VFF similarly coordinated with the PPA, DOLE, DSWD, shipping companies, and workers' groups. Halfway house staff provided direct services to trafficked victims in ports, including temporary shelter, referral, repatriation, and counseling.

I.E. COUNTRIES WITH LEGALIZED PROSTITUTION: This question is not applicable to the Philippines.

I.F. TREATMENT OF TRAFFICKING VICTIMS: The 2003 anti-trafficking law recognized trafficked persons as victims and did not penalize them for crimes related to the acts of trafficking or for obeying traffickers, regardless of their consent to exploitation. Police sometimes brought charges of vagrancy against prostitutes and trafficked victims.

I.G. VICTIM COOPERATION WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT: The government actively encouraged victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking and related crimes. Victims can file civil suits or seek legal action against traffickers. The Secretary of Justice issued a DOJ Circular instructing that all cases involving violations of the anti-trafficking law should receive preferential attention. The circular also ordered all prosecutors to reject calls by defense attorneys for dismissal of cases in which the victims recant their testimony. Pursuant to the Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act, an all-female team of police officers, examining physicians, and prosecutors must handle investigations of offenses committed against women. In the case of trafficked children, the Special Protection of Children Act and the Rule on Examination of a Child Witness mandated that a single panel conduct an interview to avoid the potential damaging effect of feeling re-victimized through a series of repeated questioning. All fines by the courts on offenders accrue to a trust fund that IACAT administered, which it used to prevent acts of trafficking, protect and rehabilitate victims, and reintegrate trafficked persons into the community.

I.H. VICTIM AND WITNESS PROTECTION: Under the Witness Protection, Security, and Benefit Program, the DOJ offered protection to witnesses from reprisals and economic dislocation by providing security protection, immunity from criminal prosecution, housing, livelihood expenses, travel expenses, medical benefits, education to dependents, and job security. However, some witness protection participants complained of insufficient security and of abusive guards. Moreover, due to lack of resources to fund the program, many who would have liked to participate could not. Many other potential witnesses may not have been aware of the existence of this program. In addition to the halfway houses, VFF also ran two safehouses in Manila and Legazpi for longer protective custody of victims, especially for those who decided to take legal actions against traffickers.

II. TRAINING FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO IDENTIFY AND PROTECT VICTIMS: The government, through IACAT and with funding from USAID and other donors, conducted regular training seminars for government officials, including those from DSWD, PNP, DOJ, DFA, DOLE, Commission on Human Rights, and various NGOs, on gender-sensitive and child-friendly handling of trafficking cases.

The BI also conducted periodic training on basic immigration laws and procedures for immigration officers and agents in the field and other personnel involved in operations. Training on anti-trafficking in persons was in the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) for consular staff, as well as Foreign Service officers and attaches, en route to foreign missions. ILO and the Department of Foreign Affairs Foreign Service Institute developed an anti-trafficking in persons training module. The training module (in CD format) will benefit DFA Foreign Service officers who were unable to undergo anti-trafficking training through PDOS.

I.J. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE FOR REPATRIATED TRAFFICKING VICTIMS: DFA, OWWA, and DSWD assisted repatriated Filipino workers who were

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victims of trafficking. The OWWA's Halfway Home program provided temporary shelter, transport services, financial assistance, and counseling services through a network of NGOs. The DSWD, working with DOLE and DOH, provided protective custody, recovery, and healing services for victims. Services included organization of support groups, psychological and psychiatric interventions, medical, legal and livelihood services, provision of limited

financial assistance, and educational assistance.

I.K. GOVERNMENT COOPERATION WITH NGOS: The vibrant local and international NGO community in the Philippines included many organizations that work directly with trafficking victims. The most active contributors included:

-- Coalition Against Trafficking in Women - Asia Pacific (CATW-AP) is an international network of feminist groups, organizations, and individuals fighting the sexual exploitation of women. The coalition brings attention to trafficking in women and girls, prostitution, pornography, sex tourism, and bride selling, mainly through media campaigns and policy advocacy. It provides preventive education program on migration and trafficking at the community and grassroots level and conducts dialogues with government agencies such as the POEA, DOLE, and DSWD on preventive and curative measures. Services include referring trafficking cases to member and partner organizations for legal, counseling and support services, and documentation of trafficking cases based on the Human Rights Information and Documentation System used by a global network of organizations concerned with human rights issues;

-- VFF focuses on the promotion of child welfare, especially migrant working children, and is active on the issue of domestic trafficking of women and children. It provides 24-hour services for victims, including the operation of several temporary shelters, counseling, employment referrals, training, and advocacy. Staff positioned at port arrival areas identify and intercept probable victims of trafficking as they disembark ships. Through funding assistance from The Asia Foundation and the USG, VFF spearheaded the creation of MSNAT, a national network committed to provide immediate and appropriate response mechanisms to prevent trafficking, investigate and prosecute offenders, and protect, rescue, recover, and reintegrate victims, especially women and children;

-- TUCP is the largest trade union network in the Philippines. The TUCP forges coalitions with various labor groups in its efforts to promote and protect the rights and welfare of workers and other disadvantaged groups, including women, youth and children, and migrant workers. TUCP's Women's Bureau is particularly active in anti-trafficking initiatives, such as public information and media campaigns, database collection and documentation, provision of legal assistance to victims, and networking. With funding support from the American Center for International Labor Solidarity and the USG, TUCP conducted an anti-trafficking project establishing a coalition of private sector organizations that will coordinate with the government to ensure the implementation of activities on trafficking in persons;

-- The American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), active in the Philippines since 1969, has an extensive network with the government, NGOs, trade unions, academia, and the business community. ACILS addresses labor issues, including irregular migration and trafficking in persons. In 2003, ACILS established a multi-sectoral Technical Working Group (TWG) to assist trafficking victims, monitor trafficking developments, process inquiries and complaints, and initiate filing of trafficking cases. TWG is composed of 37 organizations including 18 national government agencies, and 19 trade unions, NGOs, and advocacy groups;

-- Development Action for Women Network (DAWN) addresses the concerns of Filipino women migrants in Japan as well as the growing number of Japanese-Filipino children (JFCs). Almost 90 percent of Filipino OFWs in Japan are female entertainers, making them vulnerable to trafficking and sexual exploitation. In coordination with its DAWN-Japan volunteers, the local branch assists JFCs abandoned by their Japanese fathers;

-- Women's Legal Bureau (WLB) is a feminist legal NGO composed of

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lawyers, academics, and members of other professions. It provides legal services to victims and survivors of violence against women and conducts education and information campaigns to raise public awareness on women's issues. Other programs include representation

of women in judicial proceedings, training of law enforcers and members of the legal profession on gender sensitivity, empowering communities to respond to feminist issues, especially those involving violence against women, and working with women's groups toward promoting human rights;

-- Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women (TWMAEW) addresses the needs of children and women in prostitution and other victims of sexual exploitation through shelters and support centers.

It offers skills training, livelihood assistance, and psycho-social intervention. In collaboration with UNICEF and DepEd, it conducted awareness-raising campaigns on sexual abuse for 13,291 elementary school pupils. Social workers, educators, and survivors of sexual abuse facilitated the workshops;

-- Kanlungan Center Foundation (KCF) works with OFWs and their families in addressing the problems of migrant workers. It provides legal and welfare assistance, psycho-social counseling, temporary shelter, and education and training. Courses include Basic Migrants, Orientation, Migrant Rights, Legal Remedies, and Gender Awareness and Sensitivity. Kanlungan also intervenes at the grassroots level and addresses the psycho-social and economic causes and effects of migration by forging partnerships with other organizations at the community level;

-- End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) campaigns to raise general public awareness in tourism, the travel industry, and high-risk communities on the issue of children victims of sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation. ECPAT is a member of the Special Committee for the Protection of Children under the DOJ and works with local government units in major provinces and cities, other NGOs, and church-based organizations.

PREVENTION

¶6. (SBU) The answers below are keyed to the format contained in ref A, para 30:

¶A. GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRAFFICKING PROBLEM: The government considered trafficking a serious problem facing the country and actively took steps to combat trafficking. President Arroyo and her administration frequently spoke out in public about the evils of trafficking and the efforts of the government to combat TIP. They made clear the government has zero tolerance for TIP in any form. Senior officials also stressed that the government would not condone official complicity in such trafficking.

¶B. ANTI-TRAFFICKING PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS: Government agencies increased the frequency of their TIP information and education campaigns, mostly thanks to funding by bilateral international donor agencies.

-- In 2007, IACAT, with support from USAID, conducted "road show" campaigns against human trafficking in three provinces in Luzon (Batangas, Cagayan, and Quezon), each identified by the national steering committee as strategic points for intervention. The road shows aimed to raise the level of awareness in the community, especially for potential victims of trafficking and their families. The awareness and advocacy campaigns reached more than 6,000 citizens, not counting radio listeners and television viewers;

-- The government, through IACAT, broadcast anti-TIP infomercials that aired on local TV networks in three provinces where road shows were held. The infomercial provided basic information about TIP as well as information on how to report incidents to proper authorities;

-- In November and December 2007, the government held three Sub-National Conferences on Anti-Trafficking in Persons in Davao City, Cebu City, and Manila. The conferences brought together

ongoing government and non-government initiatives to combat trafficking; make recommendations for further advancements; and share relevant experiences, best practices, and success stories. These conferences improved awareness of trafficking issues in the provinces, as well as forged relationships between national-level and local partners;

-- POEA conducted nearly 1,000 pre-employment orientation seminars for more than 60,000 departing overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in 2007. These seminars sought to educate the OFWs on the risks and rewards of overseas employment. The seminar module included a video presentation on trafficking in persons;

-- NCRFW, in partnership with End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT), the Coalition Against Trafficking of Women Asia Pacific (CATW-AP), and other NGOs, conducted community awareness and education campaigns throughout the country in 2007;

-- From April 2007 to February 2008, the ACILS/TUCP Anti-Trafficking Project continued its public awareness activities on TIP in 14 regions of the country. ACILS also distributed information, education, and communication materials on migration and trafficking issues to youth, women, civic, and faith-based groups;

IC. GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIP WITH NGOS AND CIVIL SOCIETY: The relationship between government agencies, NGOs, and other elements of civil society concerned with trafficking issues was excellent. NGOs assisted the government in preventing trafficking activities, protecting and reintegrating trafficking victims, and prosecuting traffickers. NGOs often referred trafficking victims to government agencies, as the NGOs lacked the necessary funding fully to help victims and their families. Government agencies recognized the importance of engaging NGOs in their advocacy programs. Several government agencies had NGO desks that oversaw government-NGO coordination. Additionally, three NGOs focused on women, children, and OFWs were part of the IACAT.

Two examples of strong NGO-government relationships were the experiences of the Visayan Forum Foundation and the International Justice Mission. The VFF coordinated closely with local law enforcement, port authorities, and private shipping companies in rescuing trafficking victims at Manila's North Harbor Port and other ports throughout the country. Since 2001, IJM, a U.S.-based NGO employing private Philippine investigators and prosecutors, closely coordinated with government agencies to increase the number of pro bono prosecutions in the country under the 2003 anti-trafficking law. IJM investigated and gathered evidence against establishments that employed trafficked women and children, and shared this information with law enforcement. In close coordination with government prosecutors, IJM's attorneys then filed criminal cases on behalf of the exploited victims.

ID. IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION PATTERNS: Approximately five million passengers transited Manila's North Harbor in 2007, the country's largest port; as many as half were in search of employment opportunities. Despite efforts to guard major port areas, the government did not have sufficient resources adequately to monitor its borders. With more than 7,000 islands, fully monitoring maritime borders was virtually impossible given the limited resources of the maritime services.

The Philippine Coast Guard, under the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC), intercepted some ferries in order to identify trafficked victims and illegal recruiters in coordination with private shipping companies. The Maritime Police conducted investigations upon the disembarkation of passengers. It referred victims of trafficking to government agencies or local NGOs for further assistance.

Owners, managers, and key personnel of shipping companies conducted regular orientation and awareness seminars with their crews to educate them on ways to identify and report suspected trafficking victims onboard. Often, shipping companies assisted in facilitating the repatriation of minors by offering discounted fares.

In February 2007, IACAT established its first anti-trafficking task

FORCE AT MANILA'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. THE NINOY AQUINO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TASK FORCE AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS INCLUDED REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE MANILA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY, THE AIRPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT, BI, NBI, PNP, PASAY CITY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE, POEA, BUREAU OF CUSTOMS, DFA, CFO, DSWD, AND THE AIRLINE OPERATORS COUNCIL. THE TASK FORCE WILL IMPROVE INFORMATION-SHARING ACROSS AGENCIES IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE INTERCEPTION, INVESTIGATION, AND PROSECUTION OF TRAFFICKERS, AS WELL AS TO COORDINATE IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE TO TRAFFICKING VICTIMS. IACAT PLANS TO ESTABLISH SIMILAR TASK FORCES AT THE AIRPORTS IN CEBU, DAVAO, AND ZAMBOANGA.

E. COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES: THE IACAT COORDINATED, MONITORED, AND OVERSAW THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ANTI-TIP LAW, AND SERVED AS AN UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION TO COORDINATE ANTI-TIP EFFORTS IN THE PHILIPPINES. THE DOJ SECRETARY AND THE DWSD SECRETARY CO-CHAIRED THE IACAT. OTHER MEMBER AGENCIES INCLUDED DFA,

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DOLE, POEA, NCRFW, NBI, BI, AND THE PNP. THREE NGOS REPRESENTING WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS WERE ALSO PART OF THE IACAT.

IN ADDITION TO THE NATIONAL-LEVEL IACAT, THE GOVERNMENT CREATED LOCAL AND REGIONAL INTER-AGENCY COUNCILS AGAINST TIP. THE LOCAL IACATS SIMILARLY INCLUDED VARIOUS GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS, AND NGOS. ALONGSIDE THE LOCAL IACATS, LOCAL TASK FORCES IN SOME HOT SPOT AREAS COORDINATED LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PROSECUTION EFFORTS.

THE DOJ LED A NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AGAINST ABUSE, EXPLOITATION, AND DISCRIMINATION, AS WELL AS A TASK FORCE ON CHILD PROTECTION, TO ADDRESS CASES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

THE ANTI-ILLEGAL RECRUITMENT COORDINATING COUNCILS (AIRCCS) SERVED AS A VENUE AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL FOR CONSULTATION AND INFORMATION SHARING TO MAP OUT STRATEGIES IN IMPROVING THE GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-ILLEGAL RECRUITMENT PROGRAMS.

LOCAL COUNCILS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN EXISTED AT THE PROVINCIAL, CITY, MUNICIPALITY, AND VILLAGE LEVELS TO ASSIST IN IDENTIFYING CONDITIONS RELATED TO CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND EXPLOITATION, AND TO FACILITATE IMMEDIATE RESPONSES TO REPORTED CASES OF CHILD ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION.

BOTH THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN AND THE PRESIDENTIAL ANTI-GRAFT COMMISSION PURSUED OFFICIAL CORRUPTION CASES AND COORDINATED THE GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS.

F. NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION TO ADDRESS TRAFFICKING: THE GOVERNMENT MAINTAINED ITS NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS TIP, CREATED WITH NGO INPUT. IACAT LEAD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN INVOLVING DOJ, DSWD, DOLE, AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. ALL AGENCIES INVOLVED IN IACAT SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING ANTI-TRAFFICKING PROGRAMS. AS CO-CHAIR OF IACAT, DOJ ENSURED THE PROTECTION OF PERSONS ACCUSED OF TRAFFICKING, PROVIDED ACCESS TO FREE GOVERNMENT OR NGO LEGAL ASSISTANCE, AND TRAINED PROSECUTORS IN HANDLING TRAFFICKING-RELATED CASES. DSWD TOOK THE LEAD IN IMPLEMENTING REHABILITATIVE AND PROTECTIVE PROGRAMS FOR TRAFFICKED PERSONS AND PROVIDING VICTIMS WITH COUNSELING AND TEMPORARY SHELTER.

IT ALSO DEVELOPED A SYSTEM FOR ACCREDITATION AMONG NGOS IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH CENTERS AND PROGRAMS FOR INTERVENTION AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL.

G. GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO REDUCE DEMAND FOR COMMERCIAL SEX ACTS: THE GOVERNMENT, GIVEN ITS LIMITED RESOURCES, DID NOT HAVE SPECIFIC PROGRAMS AIMED AT REDUCING THE DEMAND FOR COMMERCIAL SEX ACTS. HOWEVER, SEVERAL NGOS, INCLUDING THE COALITION AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN, SPONSORED DEMAND REDUCTION PROGRAMS TARGETING TEENAGE MALES IN SOME COMMUNITIES.

H. GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO REDUCE PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL CHILD SEX TOURISM BY NATIONALS: THIS QUESTION IS NOT REQUIRED FOR THE PHILIPPINES PER REF A.

I.I. INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING TROOPS: THE PHILIPPINES DEPLOYED A TOTAL OF 725 MILITARY AND POLICE PERSONNEL IN NINE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS. BEFORE DEPLOYING TROOPS TO PEACEKEEPING

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operations, the Department of National Defense and the PNP conducted seminars and training for peacekeepers, including a training module on trafficking in persons. The DFA also provide pre-departure orientation seminars to Foreign Service officers and other government personnel, including military and police, before being assigned abroad.

2008 Anti-Trafficking Hero - Cecilia Flores-Oebanda

I.7. Mission's nomination for Anti-Trafficking Hero for the 2008 Report:

Cecilia Flores-Oebanda, a longtime advocate against trafficking, continues to pave the road for NGO and government collaboration on anti-trafficking efforts in the Philippines. Her unwavering commitment to protect victims of abuse and exploitation inspires government and NGO leaders not only in the Philippines but around the world. As the President and Executive Director of the Visayan Forum Foundation, Ms. Flores-Oebanda is the epitome of an anti-trafficking "hero," recognized through her work for the welfare of marginalized migrants, especially those working as domestic workers and trafficked women and children. She has spent most of her life working with the urban poor, peasants, sugar plantation workers, women, youth, and children. Because of her activism, she became a political prisoner for four years under the Marcos regime. She was released from detention as a result of the 1986 People Power Revolution and immediately began work on the blueprint for the Visayan Forum Foundation.

In 1991, she founded the Visayan Forum to strengthen the rights of migrant women and children from poor areas of the Visayas and Mindanao who were trafficked to urban communities as child laborers or for commercial sexual exploitation. Seventeen years later, the Visayan Forum has six regional offices and seven project areas at strategic locations around the highways and ports of the Philippines and is at the forefront of providing services to trafficked victims and exploited domestic workers. It manages five halfway houses and four domestic centers, which have rescued and provided assistance to more than 19,000 victims and potential victims of trafficking. Ms. Flores-Oebanda is the recipient of Anti-Slavery International's Anti-Slavery Award in 2005 and a Department of State International Visitor grantee in 2001. While Visayan Forum's operations were recognized as a best practice in the 2005 Trafficking in Persons Report, Post would strongly encourage G/TIP to consider naming Ms. Flores-Oebanda as one of its 2008 Anti-Trafficking Heroes.

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